

We are a people of peace. We are a people, as a nation, passionate about religious liberty. We are a people who want to see a nation joining other nations in economic development. It is who we are. It is who we have been from the beginning, and we are at our best when we are expanding that.

Since the signing of that document, several things have happened in that 2-year time period.

The first thing that happened, really, was that in October of 2020, Sudan raised their hand and said: I want to join that agreement. Then, in December of 2020, Morocco raised their hand and said: I want to be in that agreement. It quickly went from four nations to five, to six, all in this ongoing dialogue about peace in the region.

The countries have exchanged Ambassadors since then. Again, that may not sound revolutionary, but it is in that region. The UAE, Morocco, and Bahrain all opened up Embassies in Israel—again, revolutionary. Israel opened up its Embassy—the first ever in the Gulf nations—in Abu Dhabi in January of 2021. It opens up its next Embassy in Bahrain in September of 2021.

The UAE and Israel have signed comprehensive free-trade agreements. There is now \$10 billion worth of trade in the next 5 years that has been set up between those nations. Trade has begun between Israel and Morocco. In fact, it has increased 94 percent in a year. Trade between the UAE and Israel has increased 88 percent in 1 year. Trade between Israel and Egypt, even, has increased 41 percent in the last year and between Israel and Jordan, with a longstanding agreement, has increased 55 percent.

The UAE and Morocco now have university students who are studying in Israeli universities—something we thought we would never see. The UAE has overhauled its school curriculum to increase tolerance and understanding of other faiths and other religious groups.

Dozens of daily flights are now moving in those Abraham Accord countries, bringing business and tourism. There are even real conversations about water, about energy sharing and development and large economic infrastructure projects.

There are other countries, even, in the region that have started to take notice of this. Countries like Saudi Arabia are now allowing Israeli-bound flights to fly through Saudi airspace. Now, again, that may not seem revolutionary to some, that planes get to fly over them, but, you understand, 2 years ago, that didn't happen. The Saudis made every Israeli-bound flight go around their airspace. Israel and Saudi Arabia have also participated in multi-lateral naval and air drills, alongside UAE, Bahrain, and other countries. It is an enormous shift.

If I can even say this in the region, Israel and Lebanon are very close right now to forming an agreement on what

they call the Blue Line, the border between Israel and Lebanon, including the maritime areas. What does that matter? It is a tremendous development for Lebanon, for their economic development, because there is a large natural gas field just off of Lebanon's coast, but the border has been unresolved for years.

In the conflict between nations and the trust that has collapsed, the Abraham Accords have provided an opportunity and a moment for the nations in the region to say: If peace can begin with UAE and Bahrain and Sudan and Morocco and Israel and recognition and economic development and Ambassadors can be exchanged, who else can engage in economic development?

Let's start with their neighbor Lebanon. To build trust is to also build clear borders. This is real progress in 2 years.

My challenge to the administration and to our State Department is, fan the flame. Keep going on this. We have seen nations begin to do economic development, families meeting other families, school curriculum changing to taking out anti-Semitic tropes, basically, out of their curriculum. We have seen real progress in this area. Keep going. Other nations should be welcomed to be able to join in the Abraham Accords. It is not closed. Other nations can join in that economic development.

There are four of us who began the Abraham Accords Caucus: myself, Senator ROSEN, Senator ERNST, and Senator BOOKER. We launched out the four of us and invited all of our colleagues to be able to join into it. Our focus is to be able to work with the Ambassadors of those nations to say: How can we partner together to bless what has already occurred, and how can we expand into other nations? How can we encourage increased economic development?

Now, there are still very real challenges. The work is not done by any means, but it has at least begun, and progress is taking off—this simple principle of economic engagement, going past all of the government noise and saying: What if we allowed infrastructure to be able to work together? What if we allowed tourism to be able to happen? What if we allowed businesses to work with other businesses in other nations that used to be hostile? How can we engage in such a way that would help?

The four of us in the Abraham Accords Caucus brought to the floor today a resolution to recognize this 2-year anniversary. It sat before all 100 Senators, and I don't know a single Senator who is opposed to that because we all want to see peace in the Middle East. We all want to see that kind of progress, and we all want to see this increase.

So, to our State Department, keep the work going. Keep the conversation going. To nations around the world that used to be hostile to Israel and the

region, why don't we set down the past and prepare our families for the future?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nebraska.

## INFLATION

Mr. SASSE. Madam President, first, I would like to associate myself with the comments of the Senator from Oklahoma and thank him for all of the work he has done on this.

The Abraham Accords are really something to celebrate, something that we should be building on. And there is not a lot of good news right now on a whole bunch of scores, and this is worth celebrating. So commendations on your resolution.

Something we shouldn't be celebrating is inflation, and I wasn't invited, but it looks like there was one heck of a party this week at the White House.

In case folks missed it, President Biden, Majority Leader SCHUMER, Speaker PELOSI, and others gathered on the south lawn of the White House on Tuesday afternoon to clink champagne glasses and celebrate the so-called Inflation Reduction Act, passed along straight party lines last month. James Taylor even flew in for the festivities.

But at the same time that Washington politicians were patting themselves on the back, here is actual reality—not Orwellian rhetoric, not sort of made-up names for legislation to spend hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars—here is actual reality: Americans are getting slapped in the face with yet another month of bad news. Core inflation grew another six-tenths of a percent just in the month of August, defying even the most pessimistic estimations and analyses heading into those reporting numbers.

Both the Dow and the S&P had their worst day since the very arrival of COVID.

Consumer prices are now up 8.3 percent for the year, but it is worse than that for median-income households in America. Grocery prices are 13 percent more expensive this middle of September than they were the last middle of September.

How do you think about what 13 percent inflation looks like? Here is the way I explained it to my kids: You know, if a year ago today, you went to the grocery store checkout line and you had \$100 in your pocket and you had a cart full of groceries and you paid your \$100 for the \$100 of groceries, if you showed up today at the checkout line at the grocery store with the exact same cart and the exact same hundred bucks, you would then have to awkwardly and in an embarrassed way, in front of the people behind you in line, say: I have to figure out how to take \$13 of stuff off this checkout line because the \$100 that I had last year that bought \$100 of food only buys \$87 of food right now. That is what 13 percent inflation means.

Even CNN had to admit that the White House's timing was awkward, calling the event "a bizarre split-screen moment," with President Biden taking a victory lap with a so-called Inflation Reduction Act while in the real world, inflation was tanking markets. That was actually what was happening on Tuesday. On air, the CNN anchor suggested it "feels a little hard to be celebratory." That is a kind of awkward, timid way to tell the truth.

Lots of Americans have become used to this split-screen reality where Washington says one thing, but reality is completely different. It often feels like officials in Washington are living alternate realities and then trying to convince the American people: You don't know what you are talking about. What you are actually experiencing at the checkout line when you had to put back \$13 of groceries—it is not really true. The great news is, we have wine glasses in our hands; let's clink them together.

Washington, DC, is obviously in a bubble—and not for the first time. The same folks who threw that party are the types who order lots of their food from DoorDash and therefore might actually not know what the price of eggs, milk, and meat is. They are the kind of folks who see inflation as something that happens on paper, but seeing it on paper is different than feeling it.

DC sees many problems on paper but doesn't really connect with what the American people are living. DC saw the housing crisis of 2008, 2009 as something on paper, not as reality. Why? Well, because five of the seven richest counties in America are the five suburban counties of Northern Virginia and Maryland that ring Washington, DC. Think about that. Of 3,000 counties in America, 5 of the 7 richest ones are the places that surround the city.

So in 2008, 2009, when housing was collapsing everywhere, when lots of people were going bankrupt in the country, people in this city said: I don't know what the heck you are talking about. We have massive demand. Houses sell with escalation clauses.

There are way more buyers than there are sellers, so housing prices in Washington, DC, in Northern Virginia, and in suburban Maryland went up even as the country was living that collapse.

Opioids are a crisis that a lot of people in Washington, DC, know only on paper because they don't see it around the yuppie neighborhoods of Washington, DC.

Inflation is now that kind of crisis. It is a very real thing, and yet people in this city host white wine parties to talk about how great it is passing legislation that spent hundreds of billions of dollars more, accelerating inflation, and they decided they would name it the "Inflation Reduction Act."

Let's review a little bit of history about what we have learned about inflation over the last 15 months.

More than a year ago, last summer, when Americans were already feeling their prices creep higher, the President dismissed long-term worries about inflation with this quote:

There's nobody suggesting there's any unchecked inflation on the way—no serious economist.

What?

That was an incredibly bizarre, dishonest statement, and everyone knew. When it was spoken and when speechwriters wrote it, they knew that that wasn't true.

Why did they know? Well, because inflation had gone from 1.4 to 5.5 percent in the 3 months before that statement was uttered.

Larry Summers, a longtime Democratic economist across multiple administrations and who is well respected by folks in academia and in government and in both parties, was screaming at the White House not just in private but in public that this was nonsense, that they were delusional about what was happening with inflation numbers. Yet our President said that there was nobody suggesting that unchecked inflation was on the way—no serious economist.

Here is what was actually happening in White House meeting rooms at that time. Half of the Obama economic team was coming in and telling the Biden economic team: Hey, you guys are going to get caught with your pants down. That isn't true. That spin isn't reality. Inflation is big, it is bad, and it is growing.

Yet the speechwriters said: Let's have the President go out to the podium and say there is no serious economist who believes inflation is coming.

That was in July of 2021.

In February of this year, when inflation had hit 7.8 percent, our President predicted that "inflation ought to be able to start to taper off as we go through this year." He had predicted in December that inflation had already peaked. Every one of these comments was detached from reality, and the people writing the speeches knew they were detached from reality.

The President is obviously not the only offender. Last October, with high prices already eating away at families' savings accounts, White House Chief of Staff Ron Klain applauded a tweet describing inflation and supply chain snarls as "high-class problems." That is some white wine-drunk commentary for you. This is a middle-class American problem that families in all 50 States are suffering.

A week later, the White House Press Secretary shrugged off the same problem when asked about inflation as being "the tragedy of the treadmill that's delayed." "The tragedy of the treadmill that's delayed"—ouch.

Do these people know anyone in America who has ever had to put stuff back at the checkout line at the grocery store? Because that is what I have experienced and see at Walmart and Hy-Vee right now in Fremont, NE.

Have they ever sat down with people to compare their receipts week over week or month over month—those people who are looking at their receipts, knowing that they have to put stuff back? They are not wrong, and they are not talking about a 3-month delay on a Peloton delivery.

Just 2 months later, another White House Press Secretary declared that the United States is "stronger economically than we have ever been in our history." That is what was said at the White House podium: "stronger economically than we have ever been in our history"—totally drunk stuff.

According to a Gallup poll, 56 percent of Americans now say price increases are causing financial hardships for their families. That is up from 49 percent a couple of months ago and 45 percent the previous fall.

According to a Monmouth poll, nearly 9 out of 10 Americans say the country is on the wrong track, but the White House is throwing wine and cheese parties to celebrate the Inflation Reduction Act.

Americans have watched the President announce that he plans to force noncollege graduates in Scottsbluff, NE, and Beckley, WV, to pay for the debt burden of people with masters and Ph.D.s who live in Berkeley and Bethesda. Let's be clear. Fifty-six percent of all of the student loan debt in America is held by people with graduate degrees. The majority of college loan debt in America is held by people with graduate degrees, and about a third of Americans go to college. But what we should do, Washington says, is take money from noncollege graduates and give it to folks with graduate degrees. Then let's claim it is somehow going to reduce the deficit. Drunk stuff.

Americans have watched as every basic household necessity has become more expensive, from groceries to gas. Then they hear politicians change the name of their bill to the Inflation Reduction Act and applaud themselves for spending hundreds of billions of inflationary dollars. This was on the steps of the White House on Tuesday afternoon.

Folks, this isn't just offensive; it is the kind of behavior and the kind of dishonesty that poisons democracy. Politicians are saying things here that are 180 degrees reversed from reality, and that cuts to the issue of public trust. It doesn't just matter economically; it matters civically.

The relationship between the American people and their leaders is a relationship built on trust—a trust that, when elected officials are at their desks in Washington, takes seriously the needs and desires of their constituents. We have a bunch of people in Washington, DC, who mistake the Washington, DC, elite experience, where the income of folks who work for the Federal Government is substantially higher than that of the median American. It attacks public trust. Elected officials are not special. Elected officials, quite frankly, are often

not that impressive. Elected officials are not demagogues. Public servants are supposed to be serving the public.

It is in our job description to trust that the people we represent actually know something about their struggles and their challenges and their day-to-day difficulties of making ends meet. It is in our job description to listen to them, to look at their experiences, and to take them to heart. It is in our job description to think carefully about the challenges they face and the ways we can address those challenges, always with a mindful eye to the direction established by our constitutional order and the best of our democratic traditions.

That relationship is destroyed when Washington, DC, breaks faith with the American people, when it declares: You don't know what you are talking about. You don't know what your experience is at the grocery store checkout line. There is no serious inflation, and no serious economist thinks inflation is coming.

The actual numbers are 13 percent grocery and 8½ percent overall. These are late 1970s kinds of numbers.

Politicians know best.

No, we don't.

The relationship is destroyed when self-satisfied appointees and smug bureaucrats in Washington bustle up and down Pennsylvania Avenue and decide that division is more efficient politics than competent governance. Lectures about the soul of America ring pretty hollow from practitioners of this craven kind of politics of contempt.

Americans deserve better. Starting with honesty is a pretty good start.

Here is honesty: We have an inflationary crisis on our hands, and the reality is that inflation is making life a lot more difficult and a lot more precarious for millions and millions of our neighbors. Our families and friends are feeling pain at the pump and at the checkout lines. They are watching their savings accounts and pensions be nibbled away. They haven't imagined a hardship. This is reality—experiential and economic reality.

The only thing that is misaligned is the rhetoric of this place, and Americans won't be bludgeoned into believing that they are actually thriving when they are experiencing 13 percent grocery inflation. Things are hard, and the barest minimum this White House could do is to admit it, to tell the truth, and to put away the party hats.

The American people are resilient. We are tough. We are not ready to accept this as the new normal. We are going to work our way through this, but we need less condescension and less spin. We need a lot more truth-telling from those in power. We need fewer tone-deaf, wine-glass-clinking parties from folks who have escalated inflation with reckless spending and then

claimed that the American people are wrong and that this new spending will somehow reduce inflation. Nobody really believes that.

The folks who are writing those press releases and those speeches and inviting people to parties at the White House should reconsider. They should tell the truth. It is hogwash, and they know it. More importantly, the American people know it, and we should tell them the truth.

### ADJOURNMENT UNTIL MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2022, AT 3 P.M.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 3 p.m. on Monday, September 19, 2022.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 3:57 p.m., adjourned until Monday, September 19, 2022, at 3 p.m.

### NOMINATIONS

Executive nominations received by the Senate:

#### DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

ROGER B. HANDBERG, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE MARIA CHAPA LOPEZ, RESIGNED.

MARKENZY LAPOINTE, OF FLORIDA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE ARIANA FAJARDO ORSHAN, RESIGNED.

MCLAIN J. SCHNEIDER, OF NORTH DAKOTA, TO BE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE DISTRICT OF NORTH DAKOTA FOR THE TERM OF FOUR YEARS, VICE DREW H. WRIGLEY, RESIGNED.

#### IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED AIR NATIONAL GUARD OF THE UNITED STATES OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE RESERVE OF THE AIR FORCE TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 12203 AND 12212:

#### To be brigadier general

COL. DANIEL R. FOWLER

#### IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 601:

#### To be lieutenant general

MAJ. GEN. PATRICK E. MATLOCK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY TO THE GRADE INDICATED UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be brigadier general

COL. JAMES D. TURINETTI IV

#### IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

KEENAN E. DALRYMPLE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

SUSAN D. BAUMGARTNER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

STIGEN A. WESTBERG

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

BEAU D. GRAHAM

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

KRISTEN M. BARRA

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

EVANS R. WRIGHT

#### IN THE ARMY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 7064:

#### To be major

TRAVIS J. WILDER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUALS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY MEDICAL CORPS UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 7064:

#### To be major

DAVID LAW  
RAMI SARID

#### IN THE NAVY

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

#### To be commander

AMY M. RESPONDEK

THE FOLLOWING NAMED INDIVIDUAL FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR NAVY UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 531:

#### To be lieutenant commander

ELLEN M. NELSON

#### IN THE SPACE FORCE

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT IN THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE REGULAR SPACE FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTIONS 531 AND 716:

#### To be colonel

ERNEST L. BONNER

THE FOLLOWING NAMED OFFICER FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE INDICATED IN THE UNITED STATES SPACE FORCE UNDER TITLE 10, U.S.C., SECTION 624:

#### To be major

ASHTON M. SHELTON

### CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate September 15, 2022:

#### THE JUDICIARY

SARAH A. L. MERRIAM, OF CONNECTICUT, TO BE UNITED STATES CIRCUIT JUDGE FOR THE SECOND CIRCUIT.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

GEOFFREY R. PYATT, OF CALIFORNIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF CAREER MINISTER, TO BE AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE (ENERGY RESOURCES).

#### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DAVID P. PEKOSKE, OF MARYLAND, TO BE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION FOR A TERM OF FIVE YEARS.

#### DEPARTMENT OF STATE

NATHANIEL PICK, OF MAINE, TO BE AMBASSADOR AT LARGE FOR CYBERSPACE AND DIGITAL POLICY.

#### UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ROLFE MICHAEL SCHIFFER, OF NEW YORK, TO BE AN ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

#### UNITED NATIONS

PATRICK LEAHY, OF VERMONT, TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS.

JAMES E. RISCH, OF IDAHO, TO BE A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE UNITED NATIONS.